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A1 code
5 2. (Amended) A method according to claim 1 wherein said protected area is further defined by storage of [framing characters] said border characters wherein said one and said next occurrence of said border character are distinguished from a content occurrence of said border character forming a portion of said digital content.

3. (Amended) A method according to claim 2 wherein said certificate includes line elements, and at least one of said line elements begins with one of said [framing] border characters and ends with one of said [framing] border characters.

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15 15. (Amended) A digitally stored digital certificate comprising:
a digital storage medium;
a digital certificate data structure stored upon said storage medium, said data structure defining a protected area as including a sequence of characters occurring between one and a next occurrence of a designated protected area border character;
at least one digital component stored in said protected area; and
a digital signature stored in said certificate data structure but outside said protected area, said digital signature being encrypted and a function of said at least one digital component stored in said protected area.

20 16. (Amended) A digital certificate according to claim 15 wherein said protected area is established by storing [framing characters in] protected area border characters in a sequence of characters comprising said digital certificate data structure.

25 17. (Amended) A digital certificate according to claim 16 wherein said certificate data structure includes line elements, and at least one of said line elements begins with one of said [framing] border characters and ends with one of said [framing] border characters.

30 29. (Amended) A digitally stored digital certificate of product ownership of a given product by a given product owner, said certificate comprising:
a digital storage medium;
a digital certificate data structure stored upon said storage medium, said data structure defining a protected area, as including a sequence of characters occurring between
a first digital component stored in said protected area and identifying said given product;
35 a second digital component stored in said protected area and identifying said given product owner; and
a digital signature in said certificate data structure but outside said protected area, said digital signature being encrypted and a function of at least said first and second components stored in said protected area.

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one and a next occurrence of a designated protected area border character;